DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 071 116 CS 500 091

AUTHOR	Lashbrook, Velma J.; McCroskey, James C.
TITLE	Source Valence: An Improved Conceptualization.
PUB DATE	Nov 72
NOTE	8p.; Paper presented at the Western Speech Communication Assn. Convention (Honolulu, November 1972)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Behavioral Science Research; *Communication (Thought Transfer); Individual Power; *Information Theory; *Interaction Process Analysis; Research Design; *Research Methodology; Research Tools
IDENTIFIERS	*Source Valence

ABSTRACT

The concepts of credibility, attraction, power, and "homophily" (degree to which source and receiver are similar in certain attributes) have been investigated as independent and unrelated variables in the communication process. The authors seek to establish the relationship of these variables as subdivisions of the overriding concept known as source valence. First, they establish the theoretical foundations of the four components. Second, they summarize previous research on the components and then set goals for future research. Third, the authors examine some of the problems of the research methodology in this area. Their final suggestion is that researchers concentrate more on source valence rather than the subsets. (Author/RN)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 071116

SOURCE VALENCE: AN IMPROVED CONCEPTUALIZATION

Velma J. Lashbrook
Woodruff High School
Peoria, Illinois

James C. McCroskey
Department of Human Communication
West Virginia University

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Velma J. Lashbrook
James C. McCroskey
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the concepts of credibility, attraction, power, and homophily as they relate to the higher order concept of source valence. The paper considers theoretical, operational, and methodological issues related to the improved conceptualization of source valence.

Paper presented at the Western Speech Communication Association Convention
November, 1972
Honolulu, Hawaii

CS 500 091

SOURCE VALENCE: AN IMPROVED CONCEPTUALIZATION

The concepts of credibility, attraction, power, and homophily have been investigated as independent and unrelated variables in the communication process. This paper attempts to establish their relationship as sub-sets of the overriding concept labeled "source valence." In addition to the theoretical considerations this paper also considers operational and methodological problems in source valence research.

Theoretical Considerations

The components of source valence discussed in this section are credibility, attraction, power, and homophily. The research concerned with each of these components is not summarized in this paper because such summaries and syntheses are readily available. The emphasis here is on the conceptualization and theoretical foundation for the study of each concept.

Credibility

Most of the source valence research has concentrated on the credibility component. Credibility has been defined as the receiver's attitude toward a source and operationalized in terms of the dimensions of that attitude. Several summaries of credibility research (Andersen and Clevenger, 1963; McGuire, 1969; and Lashbrook, 1971) provide detailed support for the observations that follow.

Rhetorical theory has had a significant influence on credibility research. Aristotle's emphasis on ethos and Quintilian's concentration on "the good man speaking well" have both influenced the establishment of source credibility as a central variable in communication research. This centrality has been justified by the consistent finding that credibility has a significant effect on immediate attitude change, although a long-term effect has not been confirmed (Anderson and Clevenger, 1963; McCroskey, 1968; McGuire, 1969; and Lashbrook, 1971).

Consistency theory and other attitude change theories (e.g., social judgment theory) have provided a more sophisticated rationale for credibility research. Consistency theories (congruity, balance, and dissonance theories) predict that when an individual has two or more attitudes which are inconsistent with one another, change in attitude will occur. The most thorough explanation of dissonance reduction comes from studies utilizing various degrees of credibility. Aronson and Carlsmith (1963), for example, hypothesized that attitude change would be a function of the communicator's credibility and the degree of message discrepancy. The rationale for this hypothesis is based on the assumption that for different receivers the credibility of the communicator and the discrepancy with the communicator's position will be perceived differently. For the communicator with perfect credibility (the ideal case), attitude change would be a linear function of discrepancy. The greater the discrepancy,

the greater the dissonance and, hence, the greater the attitude change that results. As a communicator becomes less credible, the receiver has the option of derogating the source as a means of dissonance reduction. As the communicator's credibility declines, the curve representing attitude change will decline to the point of zero discrepancy. The results of this study support the linear relationship and consistency theory. There is a large body of research which supports the proposition that attitude change is a function of communicator credibility and the degree of discrepancy. Regardless of the obvious limitations of consistency theories, they have been extremely useful in predicting the effects of credibility on attitude change.

Credibility has been analyzed principally in terms of two dimensions, competence and character. Competence refers to the receiver's perception of the source's expertise and ability to know the issue. Character is the receiver's perception of the source's trustworthiness and motivation to communicate the issue honestly. At present, the literature suggests that perceived competence has more persuasive impact than perceived character (McGuire, 1969).

Attraction

Summaries of attraction research (Berscheid and Walster, 1969; McGuire, 1969; and McCroskey, Larson, and Knapp, 1971) suggest that consistency theory has also provided the primary base for research on this component. Consistency theory would predict that the receiver's change in orientation is a function of the attractiveness of the source.

Attraction refers to the receiver's identification with the source. McGuire (1969) has suggested that there are at least three aspects involved with attraction: similarity, familiarity, and liking. Similarity is the extent that a receiver perceives a source to be like him, familiarity refers to the frequency of contact or degree to which the receiver knows the source, and liking is the feeling of closeness that a receiver has for a source. McCroskey, Larson, and Knapp (1971) have specified four bases of attraction: proximity, physical appearance, rewards, and similarity. Proximity refers to the same idea that familiarity does and similarity is the same in both conceptualizations. Physical appearance is simply the source's physical attractiveness in terms of the personal tastes and values of the receiver. The final aspect, personal rewards, concerns the receiver's anticipation or receipt of reinforcement from the source. Researchers have suggested that each of these factors contribute to the receiver's attraction to the source and, consequently, to his orientation.

Power

General discussions of the power component (Collins and Guetzkow, 1964; Clark, 1968; and McGuire, 1969) indicate that consistency and learning theories have both provided bases for research in this area. Learning theory predicts that the source will have influence to the degree that the rerceivers perceive his actual or potential ability to reward them. This prediction also relates to the aspect of personal rewards cited in relation to the attraction component.

Power has been defined as the actual or potential ability of a source to modify the behavior of receivers (Collins and Guetzkow, 1964). At least three dimensions of power have been posited: control, concern, and scrutiny. Control is the source's sanctioning power, concern refers to how much the cares about compliance, and scrutiny is the source's ability to perceive compliance. The receivers' perceptions of these three dimensions affect the source's ability to influence.

Homophily

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) in their discussion of the diffusion of innovations indicate the importance of homophily to communication effectiveness. "Homophily" represents the degree to which a source and receiver are similar in certain attributes, and "heterophily" refers to the degree to which they are different. The concept of homophily is almost equivalent to the similarity aspect of attraction. Heterophily, on the other hand, is quite similar to the credibility dimension of competence.

Consistency theory has been used to predict interpersonal diffusion of innovations, but the relationship here is more complex. Rogers and Shoemaker have concluded that most interpersonal diffusion is homophilous. However, when interpersonal diffusion is heterophilous, receivers seek sources who are perceived to be more competent. Specifically, they seek sources who have perceived to be more competent. Specifically, they seek sources who have higher social status, more education, more mass media exposure, greater change agent contact, and who are more cosmopolite and innovative.

In comparing the research concerned with these four components of source valence several differences and several similarities emerge. The research differs in terms of both the situations and dimensions studied. Credibility research has concentrated on the public setting and the dimensions of competence and character. Research on attraction has emphasized group and interpersonal situations and considered the dimensions of similarity, familiarity, liking, physical appearance, and personal rewards. Power research has been primarily concerned with organizational and community settings and has concentrated on the aspects of control, concern, and scrutiny. Finally, homophily research has concentrated on the use of interpersonal and mass communication in communities or society and has been concerned primarily with the homophily-heterophily concept.

In spite of these differences, there are two very significant similarities. First, all four bodies of research have relied partially on the same theoretical base -- consistency theory. Second, the research has one focus. the source of communication. Not only do the four approaches all examine the influence of the source, but they investigate it in terms of the receiver's perceptions. It seems highly advantageous to begin to integrate our knowledge of the components of source valence and develop some theoretical propositions concerned with the overall concept.

Operationalizations

A persistent problem with all source valence research has been the operationalization and measurement of the central concept. This section examines the development of measurement historically.

Pre-1960 research utilized a variety of techniques to measure source valence: ranking, sociograms, prestige indices, linear rating scales, Thurstone scales, Likert scales, and semantic differential scales. In their summary of credibility research Andersen and Clevenger (1963) recommended that the dimensions of credibility should be explored through multivariate analysis (in terms of variety of auditors, speakers, and situations) using semantic differential techniques. That challenge has only been partially fulfilled.

Post-1960 research on attraction, power, and homophily has resulted in little measurement improvement. Credibility research, on the other hand, has produced measurement improvements via factor analysis. Numerous studies have attempted to establish source credibility as a multi-dimensional construct (i.e., Andersen, 1961; Berlo and Lemert, 1961; Lemert, 1963; King, 1966; McCroskey, 1966; Markham, 1968; Whitehead, 1968; Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz, 1969; Fulton, 1970; McCroskey, 1971; McCroskey and McCain, 1972; and McCroskey and Hamilton, 1972). The dimensions of competence and character (Berlo and Lemert, 1961; McCroskey, 1966; and Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz, 1969) are clearly credibility factors. In addition, credibility research has begun to isolate other dimensions of source valence. A dynamism factor isolated by Berlo and Lemert (1961) is not really credibility, because it is not exclusively evaluative. The physical attraction factor (Hamilton and Hunter, 1971) is part of the attraction component not credibility, and the homophily dimension found by McCroskey and Hamilton (1972) is also definitely not credibility. Credibility research, unintentionally, has gone beyond its original scope to isolate several dimensions of the broader concept of source valence.

Future research will achieve two goals: establishing other dimensions and determining the relative importance of the dimensions for various contexts. McCroskey and McCain (1972) have found additional dimensions of source valence not directly specified by previous research: task attraction, social attraction, and physical attraction. When researchers begin examining source valence rather than its components, several other dimensions will probably emerge. The other goal, determining relative importance, will also improve conceptualization. King (1971) is the only researcher, at present, who has attempted to determine the relative importance of dimensions in a variety of contexts. He considered both source credibility and similarity (attraction and homophily) research in the derivation of his hypotheses. The two bodies of research suggest different results. Credibility research suggests that dissimilarity (differences in competence and trustworthiness) produces more attitude change and similarity research suggests that similarity produces more attitude change. He found that regardless of message type the objectively dissimilar source (in terms of competence) was more persuasive than the objectively similar source and the subjectively similar source (in terms of attitudes, values, and interests) was more persuasive than the subjectively dissimilar source. This interaction effect helps explain much of the confusion associated with the research of these two components. More research to investigate the relative importance of source valence dimensions in a variety of communication contexts is needed.

Methodological Considerations

Several other problems existent in source valence research need to be noted. First, present research models are highly inadequate. The heavy reliance on analysis of variance is unwarranted because it does not provide enough information and, specifically, does not allow for a systematic combination of variables. The regression model is an improvement for many research problems; however, both analysis of variance and regression assume linearity. Unfortunately, some of the dimensions of source valence may not have linear relationships with important communication variables. Other research models are necessary.

Second, researchers need to develop more isomorphism between theory and data and between data and analysis. Too often the data dictates the analysis rather than the theory providing the basis for design considerations.

A third problem concerns reporting. With such great diversity in conceptualization of source valence properties careful reporting is essential. In a review of over 90 studies Lashbrook (1971) found that over one-third of the studies provided no theoretical rationale for the development of hypotheses. Operational definitions were almost totally neglected and measurement was usually poorly explained and justified. Procedure and results sections were also incomplete. In order to integrate research findings it is extremely important that reporting be complete and accurate.

A final consideration is the control of source valence. There are really three problems associated with control. First, it is clear that source valence may act as a contaminating variable in many types of research. With future research regression equations can be used to generate covariates to extract the effects of source valence. A second problem is the control of source valence as an independent variable. Inductions may be ineffective for several reasons. A common problem occurs with the use of a supposedly well-known expert whom the subjects do not know. This can be corrected by pretesting sources with a control group. A more common problem occurs with the bogus low valence source when introductory information does not make the receivers perceive the source as low. Recent research (Lashbrook, Daley, Hamilton, and Todd, 1972) may eventually provide a method for inducing credibility on the basis of the information seeking behavior of the receivers. Inductions may also be ineffective because only one dimension has been manipulated. A third control problem is associated with experimenter bias. Researcher sponsorship increases the likelihood that subjects will view the message as worthy of consideration. Holtzman (1960) examined this effect and found that instructor sponsorship, but not unfamiliar sponsorship had a confounding ethos effect. Unfamiliar sponsorship should be used to prevent that effect.

In conclusion, in addition to the operational and methodological recommendations, we would suggest that researchers should concentrate on source valence rather than its various subsets. This higher order conceptualization will provide for an improved basis for theoretical development. The most heavily researched variable has only begun to be researched. New questions rather than answers have been the product of previous research. Source valence is a complex concept about which little is yet known.

REFERENCES

Andersen, K. An experimental study of the interaction of artistic and non-artistic ethos in persuasion. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, U. of Wisconsin, 1961.

Andersen, K. & Clevenger, Jr., T. A summary of experimental research in ethos. Speech Monographs, 1963, 30, 59-78.

Aronson, J. T. & Carlsmith, J. Communicator credibility and communication discrepancy as determinants of opinion change. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1963, 67, 31-36.

Berlo, D. & Lemert, J. A factor analytic study of the dimensions of source credibility, Paper presented to the Speech Association of America, December, 1961.

Berlo, D., Lemert, J., & Mertz, R. Dimensions for evaluating the acceptability of message sources. Public Opinion Quarterly, 1969, 33, 563-576.

Berscheid, E. & Walster, E. Interpersonal attraction. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969.

Clark, T. Community structure and decision-making: comparative analyses. San Francisco: Chandler, 1968.

Collins, B. & Guetzkow, H. A social psychology of group processes for decision-making. New York: John Wiley, 1964.

Fulton, R. The measurement of speaker credibility. Journal of Communication, 1970, 20, 270-279.

Hamilton, P. & Hunter, R. The effects of bralessness on perception of communication sources. Paper presented to the International Communication Association, Atlanta, Georga, April 1972.

Holtzman, P. Confirmation of ethos as a confounding element in communication research. Speech Monographs, 1966, 33, 464-466.

King, T. An experimental study of the effect of ethos upon the immediate and delayed recall of information. Central States Speech Journal, 1966, 17, 22-28.

King, S. Social influence: a function of degree and type of interpersonal similarity and message type? Paper presented to the Speech Communication Association, San Francisco, December 1971.

Lashbrook, V. Source credibility: a summary of experimental research. Paper presented to the Speech Communication Association, San Francisco, December 1971.

Lashbrook, W., Daley, J, Hamilton, P., & Todd, W. A theoretical consideration of the assessment of source credibility as a linear function of information seeking behavior. Unpublished paper, Illinois State University, Communication Research Center, 1972.

Lemert, J. Dimensions of source credibility. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, August, 1963.

Markham, D. The dimension of source credibility of television newscasters. Journal of Communication, 1968, 18, 57-64.

McCroskey, J. Scales for the measurement of ethos. Speech Monographs, 1966, 33, 65-72.

McCroskey, J. An introduction to rhetorical communication. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

McCroskey, J. & Hamilton, P. Dimensions of source valence in small group communication. Unpublished paper, Illinois State University, Communication Research Center, 1972.

McCroskey, J., Larson, C., & Knapp, M. An introduction to interpersonal communication. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971.

McCroskey, J. & McCain, T. The measurement of interpersonal attraction. Unpublished paper, Illinois State University, Communication Research Center, 1972.

McGuire, W. The nature of attitudes and attitude change. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), The handbook of social psychology. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969, pp. 136-314.

Rogers, E. & Shoemaker, F.F. Communication of innovations. New York: Free Press, 1971.

Whitehead, J. Factors of source credibility. Quarterly Journal of Speech. 1968, 54, 59-63.